

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of

Date : October 11, 2000

Hitoshi Kihara et al.

Our Docket : SHX 314

For : APPARATUS, METHOD FOR ENRICHMENT OF THE HEAVY ISOTOPE OXYGEN AND PRODUCTION METHOD FOR HEAVY OXYGEN WATER

Assistant Commissioner for Patents

BOX PATENT APPLICATION

Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Preliminary to the review of the above identified application, please enter the following amendments.

In the claims:

Please cancel claims 1-11, without prejudice.

Please add new claims 12-36, as follows.

--12. An apparatus for separation of a vapor or liquid mixtures comprising a plurality of components using a plurality of distillation columns (a first column to an n^{th} column) constructed in a cascade comprising:

introduction conduits which connect the bottom of a k^{th} column ($1 \leq k \leq (n-1)$) or an outlet of a reboiler provided in the vicinity of the bottom of the k^{th} column to the top of a $(k+1)^{\text{th}}$ column, an inlet of a condenser provided in the vicinity of the top